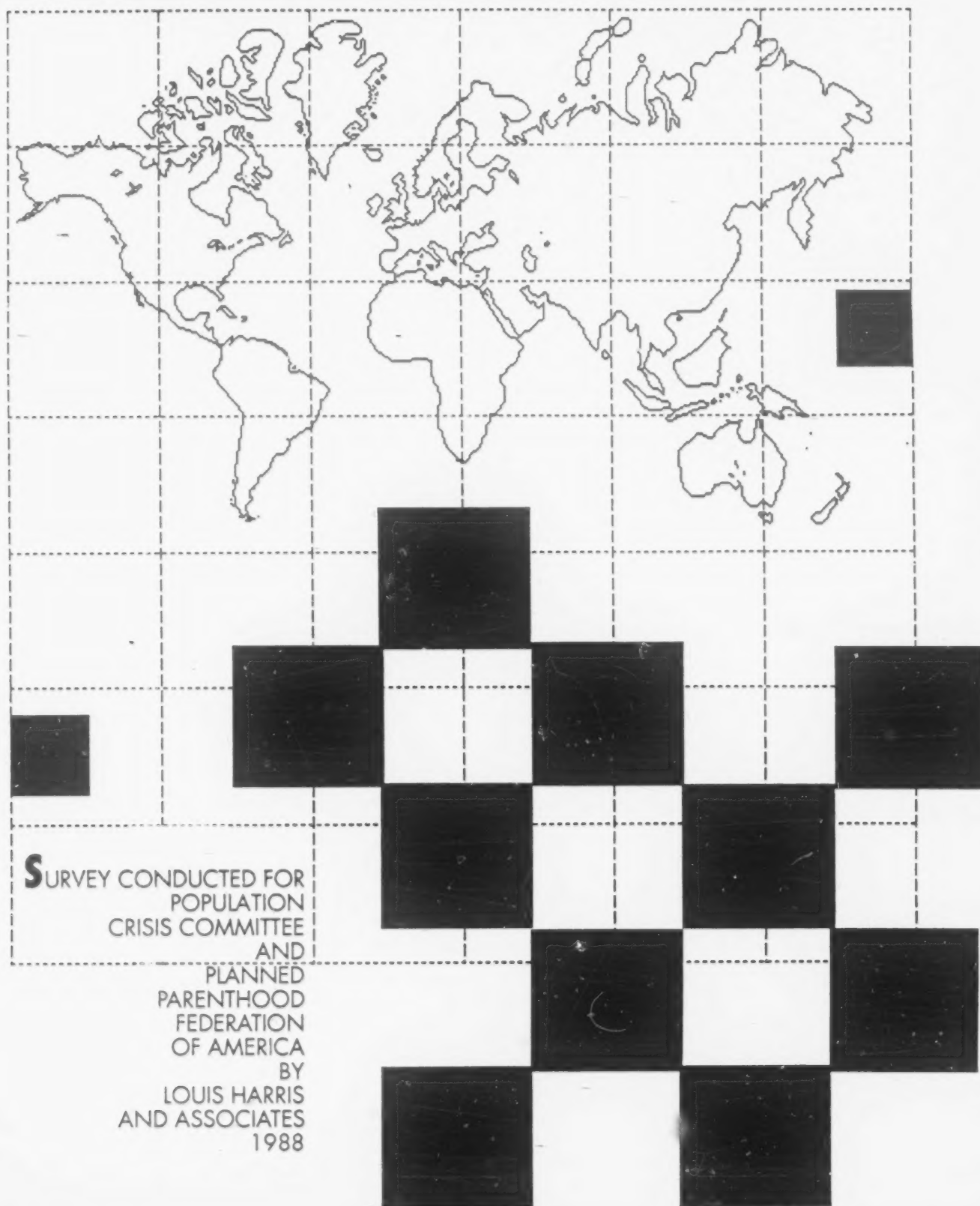


Americans' Attitudes About International Family Planning and Population Issues



Study No. 884004

AMERICAN ATTITUDES TO
INTERNATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING
AND POPULATION ISSUES

A survey conducted for:

The Population Crisis Committee and
The Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Fieldwork:

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of one part of a nationwide survey on issues related to population, contraception, abortion and public policy. This section of the survey includes questions related to population growth; all except one deal with developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The full report, which will include responses to questions on a broad range of other issues, will be released separately.

This survey provides measures of what Americans know about current population trends, what they see as the consequences of rapid population growth, and what they would like the United States government to do about it.

The survey is based on a nationwide cross-section of 1,250 adults. The sampling method is the same as that used for the great majority of Harris nationwide surveys, conducted by telephone, and is described in detail in the Appendix. The telephone interviews were conducted between May 4-30, 1988.

Acknowledgements

Louis Harris and Associates is grateful to the Population Crisis Committee and Planned Parenthood Federation of America for making this research possible, and for their suggestions for issues to be covered in the survey. However, responsibility for the wording of the questions, the execution of the survey and the analysis of the results rests with the Harris firm.

A Note on the Tables

Some tables may not total to 100% because all percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number or because of multiple responses.

THE FINDINGS

Overview

The survey results are simple and straightforward. They show that the average American is aware that population is growing rapidly in the poor countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and that he or she believes this is bad for the countries concerned, bad for the world's environment, bad for international stability and bad for the United States.

Most Americans, therefore, believe that it is in the national interest to provide financial support for birth control programs in such countries, and that this aid should be given whether or not abortion is legal there.

While this is an accurate summary of the majority view, quite sizable minorities have differing opinions.

Knowledge of Population Trends

Most Americans are reasonably well informed about key population trends, although sizable numbers are not:

- 76% give the correct answer that the United States' population is growing (Table 1); but 14% say it is stable, and 9% think that the United States' population is shrinking;
- 35% know (or are able to guess in response to a multiple choice question) that the world's population numbers between 5 and 6 billion and most of the rest are reasonably close (Table 2); and
- The median estimate of Americans is that it will take 20 years for the world's population to double if present trends continue (Table 3). This compares with the projection by the United Nations' Population Division that it will take 40 years.

The segment of the population which is most aware that the United States' population is growing is the Hispanic population, which is itself growing at a much faster rate than the population as a whole.

However, many Americans are not fully aware of how much of the world's population growth is in developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Only 50% of all adults say that more than half of all population growth is in these countries (Table 4), while current estimates are that more than 90% of the growth is happening there. There is some correlation between educational level and being able to give accurate answers to this question, but fully one-third of college graduates believe that only one-half or less of world population growth is in the developing countries.

TABLE 1

PERCEIVED TREND IN U.S. POPULATION

Q.1 Based on what you know, is the United States population stable, shrinking, or growing in size?

Base:	<u>All Adults</u> (1250) %	<u>Whites</u> (1067) %	<u>Blacks</u> (111) %	<u>Hispanics</u> (72) %
Stable	14	14	14	5
Shrinking	9	9	8	6
Growing	76	75	76	87
Not sure	2	2	2	2

TABLE 2

ESTIMATE OF WORLD POPULATION TODAY

Q.2 Would you estimate that the world population today is above 6 billion, between 5 and 6 billion, between 4 and 5 billion, or below 4 billion?

Base:	All Adults
	(1250) %
Above 6 billion	32
Between 5 and 6 billion*	35
Between 4 and 5 billion	17
Below 4 billion	7
Not sure	10

*Correct answer.

TABLE 3

HOW LONG UNTIL THE WORLD'S POPULATION DOUBLES?

Q.3 If the world population continues growing at today's rate, how many years do you think it will take before the world's population doubles?

Base:	All Adults (1250) %
5 years or less	8
6-10 years	20
11-19 years	8
20 years	17
21-49 years	11
50 years or more	15
Median	20
Not sure	21

The United Nations' Population Division estimates that it will take 40 years.

TABLE 4

HOW MUCH OF POPULATION GROWTH IS IN DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES OF ASIA, AFRICA, AND LATIN AMERICA?

Q.4 The world population is growing by about 90 million a year, about how much of that growth do you think is in developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America -- a quarter, half, three quarters, or almost all of it?

	EDUCATION				
	All Adults (1250) %	Less Than High School (166) %	High School Graduate (451) %	Some College (315) %	4-Year College Graduate (314) %
Base:					
A quarter	15	20	16	9	10
A half	31	29	34	36	23
Three quarters	34	18	37	39	49
Almost all	16	27	11	13	17
Not sure	3	6	2	3	1

According to the United Nations' Population Division, the correct answer is 91%.

The Consequences of Rapid Population Growth in Poor Countries

Americans believe that continued rapid population growth in the Third World will have all kinds of unfortunate and unpleasant consequences. They think that rapid population growth is bad for the countries concerned, bad for the world's environment, bad for international stability, and bad for the U.S.A.

More than 90% of adults believe that as a result:

- Food shortages and famine will get worse; and that
- More countries will rely on famine relief and aid from the U.S. (Table 5A).

Between 86% and 89% of adults believe that, if the population continues to grow rapidly in poor countries, then:

- The poor countries will get poorer;
- There will be more illegal immigrants into the U.S.A.;
- There will be more international crises; and
- The world environment will get worse.

On only one item on the list was there less than an overwhelming consensus. While a 57% majority believe that rapid population growth will cause more agricultural land to turn into desert, one-third of all adults (34%) do not believe that this would happen.

Most people also believe that there is a direct connection between the number of poor people in other countries and the U.S. economy. Almost 7 out of 10 adults (69%) agree with the statement that "so long as there are millions of poor people in Asia and Africa willing to work at very low wages, there will be more U.S. jobs going overseas" (Table 5B).

TABLE 5A

PERCEIVED CONSEQUENCES OF CONTINUED RAPID
POPULATION GROWTH IN POOR COUNTRIES

Q.7 If the populations of poor countries continue to grow rapidly, do you think that (READ EACH ITEM), or not?

		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
Base: 1250 (All Adults)				
The poor countries will stay poor	%	89	8	3
Food shortages and famine will get worse	%	91	7	2
More countries will rely on famine relief and aid from the United States	%	93	6	1
There will be more illegal immigrants entering the United States	%	89	9	2
There will be more international crises	%	87	9	4
More agricultural land will turn into desert	%	57	34	8
The world environment will get worse	%	86	12	2

TABLE 5B

IMPACT ON U.S. JOBS

Q.8 Do you agree or disagree with this statement -- so long as there are millions of poor people in Asia and Africa willing to work at very low wages, there will be more U.S. jobs going overseas?

		<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
More U.S. jobs going overseas	%	69	27	4

What Should be Done

Almost everybody (89%) would like poor countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to have strong and effective birth control programs (Table 6). Only 8% of adults oppose their having such programs.

The highest proportion of people opposed to strong and effective birth control programs in poor Third World countries are found among Catholics (11%) and Hispanics (10%), but even among these groups support for strong and effective programs is overwhelming.

Three out of every five adults (59%) believe that it's in the United States' interest to help slow population growth overseas (Table 7), and (60%) that the United States government should therefore give family planning aid and funding to developing countries even where abortion is legal (Table 8). Majorities of Catholics (57% and 61%), Evangelical Christians (57% and 50%), and Republicans (61% and 62%), all take this view, in opposition to the views of their leaders. The weakest support for the majority view was found among the least educated Americans, where only pluralities believe that it's in the United States' interest to slow population growth and give aid to developing countries where abortion is legal.

TABLE 6

WHETHER POOR COUNTRIES SHOULD HAVE STRONG
AND EFFECTIVE BIRTH CONTROL PROGRAMS

Q.6 In general, do you think poor countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America should have strong and effective birth control programs, or not?

	RELIGION				USUALLY VOTE		His-panics
	All Adults (1256) %	Pro- testant (712) %	Cath- olic (343) %	Evan- gelical/ Chris- tian* (220) %	Repub- lican (427) %	Demo- crat (507) %	
Base:							
Yes, should have	89	92	86	91	90	90	88
No, should not have	8	5	11	7	7	7	10
Not sure	3	3	4	2	3	3	2

*Evangelical Christian is defined as a protestant who belongs to, attends, or watches television, listens to radio, or receives literature from evangelical churches or preachers.

TABLE 7

PERCEIVED U.S. INTEREST IN WORLD POPULATION TREND

Q.5 Do you think it's in the United States' interest to help slow population growth rate overseas, or not?

	EDUCATION				
	All Adults (1250) %	Less Than High School (166) %	High School Graduate (451) %	Some College (315) %	4-Year College Graduate (314) %
Base:					
Yes, in United States' interest	59	49	58	63	73
No, not in United States' interest	34	37	38	33	22
Not sure	7	13	5	3	5

	USUALLY VOTE		RELIGION		
	Repub- lican (427) %	Demo- crat (507) %	Protes- tant (712) %	Cath- olic (343) %	Evan- gelical/ Christian* (220) %
Base:					
Yes, in United States' interest	61	59	60	57	57
No, not in United States' interest	32	34	33	35	38
Not sure	7	7	7	7	4

*Evangelical Christian is defined as a protestant who belongs to, attends, watches television, listens to radio, or receives literature from evangelical churches or preachers.

TABLE 8

WHETHER U.S. GOVERNMENT SHOULD HELP FUND FAMILY PLANNING
PROGRAMS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WHERE ABORTION IS LEGAL

Q.9 Do you think the U.S. government should give family planning aid and funding to developing countries in Africa and Asia where abortion is legal, or not?

	All Adults (1250) %	EDUCATION				RELIGION		
		Less Than High School (166) %	High School Graduate (451) %	Some College (315) %	4-Year College Graduate (314) %	Pro- tes- tant (712) %	Cath- olic (343) %	Evan- gel- ical/ Chris- tian (220) %
Base:								
Should	60	47	57	71	71	57	61	50
Should not	34	42	37	26	24	36	33	40
Not sure	6	11	6	3	5	7	6	10

	USUALLY VOTE		CLAIMED VOTING	
	Republican (427) %	Democrat (507) %	Voter (760) %	Non-Voter (440) %
Base:				
Should	62	63	60	60
Should not	33	31	34	34
Not sure	5	6	7	6

Implications for November

Aid to developing countries and support for Third World population programs are not likely to be big issues in November. As many as 14% claim that they would certainly not vote for a candidate whose views on U.S. support for birth control programs in developing countries they disagreed with (Table 9). If they actually did this, it would involve 8% of the electorate being unwilling to vote for a candidate opposed to such aid, and 5% being unwilling to vote for a candidate who favored it. However, experience suggests that both those numbers are inflated and that the actual impact of this issue would not be nearly as large as this unless, for some reason, the issue becomes much more prominent in the elections this fall.

TABLE 9A

CLAIMED IMPACT ON VOTING BEHAVIOR
OF CANDIDATE WITH WHOM VOTERS DISAGREED ON ENDING
U.S. SUPPORT TO BIRTH CONTROL IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Q.10 Now, suppose in the election this year, you found a candidate whose views you mostly agreed with. Then suppose the same candidate took a position on ending U.S. support to birth control programs in developing countries that you disagreed with completely. Would you certainly not vote for that candidate, probably not vote for him, or would you still vote for him or her?

Base:	All Adults	CLAIMED VOTING		USUALLY VOTE	
	(1250)	Voter (760)	Non-Voter (440)	Republican (427)	Democrat (507)
	%	%	%	%	%
Would <u>certainly</u> not vote for him	14	14	14	12	15
Would <u>probably</u> not vote for him	41	36	46	42	41
Would <u>vote</u> for him	39	43	35	40	39
Not sure	6	7	5	5	5

TABLE 9B

THE PROPORTIONS OF THOSE FAVORING AND OPPOSING
U.S. FAMILY PLANNING AID TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
WHO COULD NOT VOTE FOR CANDIDATES THEY DISAGREED WITH

Q.10 Now, suppose in the election this year, you found a candidate whose views you mostly agreed with. Then suppose the same candidate took a position on ending U.S. support to birth control programs in developing countries that you disagreed with completely. Would you certainly not vote for that candidate, probably not vote for him, or would you still vote for him or her?

	ATTITUDES TO U.S. AID TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE LEGAL ABORTION*	
	Those Who Favor (792) %	Those Who Oppose (390) %
Base:		
Would certainly not vote for him	14 (8%)**	15 (5%)**
Would probably not vote for him	43	37
Would vote for him	39	42
Not sure	4	7

*Q.9 Do you think the U.S. government should give planning aid and funding to developing countries in Africa and Asia where abortion is legal, or not?

**Numbers in parentheses show the same people as are percentages of all adults.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX:
SAMPLING METHODOLOGY

LOUIS HARRIS AND ASSOCIATES

This survey is based on interviews with 1,250 randomly selected adults across the country, conducted by telephone in May 1988.

Introduction to Surveys of the Public

Louis Harris and Associates' telephone surveys of the public are based on a national sample of the civilian population (18 years of age and older) of the United States. Those living in Alaska and Hawaii are not represented, nor are those in prisons, hospitals, or religious and educational institutions, unless such individuals have their own outside phone line. Samples are based on the Census Bureau's adult population figures for each state in the country. These figures are updated by intercensal estimates produced annually by the Census Bureau, and sample locations are selected biennially to reflect changes in the country's demographic and geographic profile.

National samples are stratified on two dimensions -- geographic region and metropolitan versus nonmetropolitan residence. Stratification ensures that the sample will reflect, within 1%, those living in different regions of the country and those living in Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA's) and non-SMSA's. Within each stratum, the selection of the primary sampling unit (PSU) is achieved through multistage, unclustered sampling. First states, then counties, and then minor civil divisions are selected, with probability of selection proportionate to Census Bureau estimates of their respective populations.

Random Digit Dialing

Louis Harris and Associates employs a random-digit-dialing procedure to select households within primary sampling units. Random digit dialing is a significant improvement over previously used techniques, extending the potential coverage rate to almost 95% of the U.S. population.

LOUIS HARRIS AND ASSOCIATES

Unless some method of random digit dialing is used, telephone samples must be drawn directly from published lists. However, since the population of unlisted phone number subscribers is large and demographically dissimilar to subscribers with listed phone numbers, reliance on telephone directories alone yields seriously biased samples. For this reason, using published phone listings as the universe is inadequate for telephone surveys and inferior to using random digit dialing.

The use of a random-digit-dialing method offers other important advantages:

- The sample is highly representative.
- Unlisted telephone numbers have the same probability of inclusion in the sample as listed numbers. This is particularly important in reaching both high income and minority populations.
- Respondents are geographically dispersed, rather than clustered.

Sample Development for Screening the Public

Virtually all of the hundreds of national telephone surveys of the public conducted by the Harris organization each year are based on a modified, stratified, random-digit-dialing method. In addition, Harris telephone surveys use a stratified area-probability approach rather than a single stage sample.

There are three important advantages to using an area-probability approach:

- It allows greater stratification of the population (Harris samples have twelve strata).
- It allows comparisons with Census Bureau data and other published demographic information that have a geographic base.
- It is compatible with sampling for in-person interviewing, thus providing greater versatility in study design.

The sample is developed in the following multistage process. First, a listing is constructed of the latest estimates of the adult population of every state within each region in rank order, then a running cumulative total of gross sums is produced. Next, a skip factor is calculated as t/n , where t is the adult population of the stratum and n is the number of sample points needed. Then a random number, ψ , smaller than the skip factor, is selected. Beginning with the random number, ψ , the sample points are then assigned according to where the numbers ψ , $(\psi + t/n)$, $(\psi + 2 t/n)$, $(\psi + 3 t/n) \dots (\psi + (n-1 t/n)$ fall on the running cumulative total of the adult population within that stratum. This same procedure is applied to each state within each region to form PSU's.

At the next stage of selection, one telephone number for each PSU is randomly selected from the updated Harris library of telephone directories. The selected numbers are then altered by dropping the last two digits (or occasionally just the last digit in rural areas) and replacing them with randomly selected two-digit numbers. As many randomly selected two-digit numbers as needed are successively appended until a working residential number is reached or until a screen is completed in each PSU. Technically, this method of sampling produces an epsem sample of all published banks of telephone number, i.e. a sample with an equal probability of selection method.

Stratification of Telephone Samples of the Public

The core telephone exchanges are stratified by two variables -- geographic region and place of residence. The United States is divided into four regions, as follows:

1. East: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, and West Virginia.

2. South: Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma.
3. Midwest: Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota.
4. West: Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Nevada, California, Oregon, and Washington.

We also use three categories for place of residence:

1. Central City: Every place defined by the Census Bureau as a central city of a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area.
2. Rest of Metropolitan Area: Every place that is not a central city but is within SMSA boundaries.
3. Outside Metropolitan Area: Every place that is not included in any of the other two categories.

We then define each place of residence category within each region as a stratum.

Control of the Sample

In order to maintain reliability and integrity in the sample, the telephone field staff follows these procedures when a respondent contact is attempted:

- A nonanswering telephone is dialed two more times over a three-day period. At the end of this time, if no contact is made, a new telephone number is generated for that PSU.
- If a business telephone is reached or if contact is made with a household in which a potential respondent presents a language barrier, a new telephone number is generated for that PSU.
- Once a residential contact is established, the interviewer uses a script to screen the household for eligibility.

Callback Strategy

In order to attain the highest possible response rates within reasonable cost constraints, callbacks are made according to the following guidelines:

No Answer/Not-at-Homes: An initial call and then two callbacks to reach an adult member of the household. Callbacks are made on different days and at different times of the day. After the third call, the household is replaced by another number in that PSU.

Refusals: One callback to try to convert any designated respondent who has refused or terminated an interview. If after the conversion attempt the designated respondent still declines the interview, another household is selected in that PSU.

Unavailable Respondents: An initial call and two callbacks to reach the designated member of the household. If after the third call the respondent is still not available for the interview, another household is selected in that PSU.

Busy Signals: An initial call, a followup fifteen minutes later, and two callbacks to reach a member of the household. Callbacks are made on different days and at different times of the day. If the telephone is still busy after the fourth call, a new number is selected in that PSU and the household is replaced.

Weighting of the Sample

The sample is weighted to the Census Bureau's latest population parameters for age, gender, race, and education. This adjusts these key variables, where necessary, to their actual proportions in the population. Only

slight weighting is necessary in Harris samples to correct for sub-group variations in telephone penetration and non-response rates.

All surveys tend to underrepresent to some extent the most disadvantaged stratum of society due to the inherent difficulty of reaching them. Weighting of data by such factors as race and education serves to correct any such underrepresentation and to assure that final results are fully projectable.

Reliability of Survey Percentages

It is important to bear in mind that the results from any sample survey are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of this variation is measurable and is affected both by the number of interviews involved and by the level of the percentages expressed in the results.

Table A-1 shows the possible sample variation that applies to percentage results for this survey. The chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than the indicated number of percentage points from the result that would have been obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.

For example, if the response for a sample size of 1,500 is 30%, then in 95 cases out of 100 the response in the total population would be between 28% and 32%. Note that survey results based on subgroups of small size can be subject to large sampling error.

These errors account for sampling error only. Survey research is also susceptible to other errors, such as in data handling and in interviewer recording. The procedures followed by Louis Harris and Associates, however, keep errors of these kinds to a minimum.

Table A-1

APPROXIMATE SAMPLING TOLERANCES (AT 95% CONFIDENCE) TO
USE IN EVALUATING PERCENTAGE RESULTS APPEARING IN THIS REPORT

Number of People Asked Question on Which Survey Result Is Based	Survey Percentage Result at 10% or 90%	Survey Percentage Result at 20% or 80%	Survey Percentage Result at 30% or 70%	Survey Percentage Result at 40% or 60%	Survey Percentage Result at 50%
2,000	1	2	2	2	2
1,500	2	2	2	3	3
1,000	2	2	3	3	3
900	2	3	3	3	3
800	2	3	3	3	3
700	2	3	3	4	4
600	2	3	4	4	4
500	3	4	4	4	4
400	3	4	4	5	5
300	3	5	5	6	6
200	4	6	6	7	7
100	6	8	9	10	10
50	8	11	13	14	14